

All of the experienced, dedicated, and knowledgeable sitting judges, legal scholars, and lawyers who have worked with or against Judge Barrett had high praise for her intellect and ability to communicate clearly and effectively. . . . Given the breadth, diversity, and strength of the positive feedback we received from judges and lawyers of all political persuasions and from so many parts of the profession, the Standing Committee would have been hard-pressed to come to any conclusion other than that Judge Barrett has demonstrated professional competence that is exceptional.

We are fortunate to have a nominee like Judge Barrett, and I look forward to confirming her to the Supreme Court in the very near future.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, in addition to considering Judge Barrett's nomination this week, the Senate will once again be taking up coronavirus relief legislation.

We tried this in September, of course, but Senate Democrats filibustered our relief bill. But we are going to try again because we believe there are priorities that need to be met—priorities that everyone should be able to agree on. They are things like helping the hardest hit small businesses, getting schools the resources they need to safely reopen and safely operate, and providing additional healthcare resources to fight the virus.

Democrats, of course, have spent a lot of time talking about how we need to pass additional coronavirus relief, but despite being given every opportunity to come forward with a realistic compromise bill, they have continued to insist on bloated legislation that would not only spend taxpayer dollars on noncoronavirus-related measures but would not have a chance of becoming law.

It is very difficult for me to understand Democrats' thinking—that is, if they really want to get more COVID relief to Americans and don't just want to use this as a political issue.

I realize that Democrats would like to pass exactly the bill they want, but their liberal wish list simply wouldn't make it through Congress. Democrats could, however, get something through Congress.

Republicans have made it clear from the beginning that we are willing to compromise with Democrats if they will just come to the table with a reasonable offer, but Democrats have so far decided that they would rather see Americans get no relief—zero relief—than compromise with Republicans. That is really difficult to understand, unless, as I said, Democrats aren't really interested in getting more COVID relief to Americans.

The Democrats' position makes a lot more sense if they are just trying to exploit this crisis for political gain.

But Republicans are going to try again this week. The bill that we are bringing up would address some of the Nation's most important coronavirus priorities—priorities, I would add, that are bipartisan priorities. I hope that

some Democrats will join us to get additional relief to the American people.

The Democrat leadership may be holding coronavirus relief hostage, but rank-and-file Democrats don't have to. They don't have to have their all-or-nothing wish list. They can come to a reasonable compromise and give much needed resources to the American people. Instead, what they are saying is zero relief—no relief—is better than compromising with Republicans. Unfortunately, that is an unfortunate position for them to be in and a very unfortunate position for the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I rise this afternoon in support of the amendment that Senator RUBIO and I have introduced to extend and strengthen the Paycheck Protection Program. It would allow our Nation's hardest hit small businesses to get a second forgivable PPP loan that they so desperately need. Our amendment would make available \$258 billion for new PPP forgivable loans.

Madam President, as I know you are aware from your experience in West Virginia, the Paycheck Protection Program has been hugely successful. In the State of Maine, three out of four of our small businesses have received forgivable loans totaling \$2.9 billion. To put that in context, that is equal to approximately half of the entire State budget. Most important of all, those loans have helped to sustain the jobs of more than 250,000 Mainers.

Nationwide, the PPP has been a critical lifeline for more than 5 million small employers, helping to sustain upward of 50 million American jobs.

As the Washington Post wrote in June following a dramatically better than expected jobs report: "Give some credit to the government relief efforts, especially the Paycheck Protection Program, for bringing back jobs."

This program has provided one-time loans sufficient to support 8 weeks of payroll plus a limited amount to help cover certain overhead expenses, which were completely forgivable as long as borrowers retained and paid their employees. Our purpose was to help small businesses save jobs and pay their workers, keeping that all-important employer-employee relationship intact so that, when businesses could reopen and Americans could go back to work, it could happen quickly when the pandemic subsided.

When Chairman RUBIO and I, together with Senators BEN CARDIN and JEANNE SHAHEEN, put the PPP together at the onset of the national emergency,

none of us could have envisioned that the pandemic would be so persistent, that here in October it would still be forcing shutdowns and mitigation measures that many months later.

Yet, the cruel fact is that the virus is still spreading, and many of the steps taken to fight it, while necessary to protect public health, threaten catastrophic damage to many small businesses and their employees who have been sustained by the PPP loan funds, but they are still unable to return to normal operations.

According to the NFIB, our Nation's largest advocacy group for small business, 84 percent of its small business members exhausted their PPP loan funds by mid-August. Many fear that they will have to lay off their employees—the last thing they want to do—or even cease operations altogether if more support is not forthcoming soon.

In a key letter in support of our amendment circulated today, the NFIB also said that its most recent survey shows that 49 percent of its members anticipate needing some sort of additional financial support in the next 12 months.

Let me give you an example. I recently learned of a T-shirt printing shop in Maine that received a PPP loan. It provided a lifeline to get this business through the past several months, but with many youth sports leagues and school activities still suspended, this business and its employees need more help to sustain them until springtime, when they hope to once again be printing T-shirts for little league teams and other sporting events.

The impact of the pandemic has been critically acute for our hotels, our restaurants, our B&Bs, and our seasonal businesses that rely on a strong summer to pay their bills throughout the year. A State like mine, which is so dependent on tourism, has been particularly hard-hit since many of our tourism-based businesses lost the first part of the summer.

A recent survey by the American Hotel and Lodging Association showed that, if we do not act and act soon to provide additional assistance, 74 percent of our Nation's hotels will be forced to lay off more workers, and two-thirds could even be forced to close their doors entirely.

The same is true in my State of Maine. An article published last month in the Bangor Daily News reports that the State could stand to lose two-thirds of hotels and direct lodging jobs if Congress doesn't approve more aid soon.

Our restaurants are also struggling. While tourists finally started to return to Maine in August, this summer season has understandably been one of the slowest on record for my State. With the warm weather gone and outdoor dining no longer feasible, many of our restaurants can accommodate only about half as many customers as they used to be able to accommodate and

still comply with the CDC guidelines. They fear that they may not be able to make it through the winter without further help.

A few days ago, I received an email from a couple who owns an award-winning restaurant in Portland, ME. This couple told me that they would have closed without the PPP loan but that they haven't taken a paycheck since March and simply cannot make it through the winter without a second round.

They put it as follows:

[We] love that PPP enabled us to keep in contact with our staff, even when they were not able to work in the beginning [due to the State restrictions]. Furthermore, it helped us to be able to hire them back so that we could reopen immediately. [But] at this point, we are staying open only to support our employees. The new PPP would give us the needed funds to limp through winter, while still keeping our staff employed and our customers safe.

I am sure that many other Members of the Senate are seeing the same in their States, and that is why it is so important that we renew once again this very successful program.

As you know, we went through the first \$359 billion in just 13 days. That is what the demand was like. Then we passed additional legislation to replenish the program with \$320 billion, but we only extended the date to August 8 for applicants for the program. We need to reopen it up to those who didn't apply the first time and now find themselves in need and to allow the hardest hit businesses to receive a second PPP loan.

We also need to do this to help our nonprofits that are also struggling to survive, and that is why we simply must put aside any partisan politics. This program was the product of bipartisan negotiations that went on day after day, night after night, and we came together.

Let me describe the key points in this proposal. First, the amendment would allow those small employers that have seen their revenues decline by 35 percent or more in the first, second, or third quarter of this year compared to the same quarter last year to receive an additional Paycheck Protection Program loan.

Second, because we want to target this additional assistance to the businesses that need it most, we generally limit eligibility to entities that have 300 or fewer employees, rather than 500.

Third, we expand the list of forgivable PPP expenses in some very commonsense ways. We allow forgiveness for the supplier costs and investments in facility modifications and personal protective equipment for the business to operate safely for its employees and its customers. Examples would be those plexiglass guards—the shields we are seeing everywhere—masks for employees, of course, and patio insulations and related outdoor furnishings. This is especially important to restaurants facing dining restrictions and those struggling to get the high-quality

food supply needed to operate because they have fallen behind in their bills.

Fourth, we extend PPP to small 501(c)(6) organizations that are not lobbying organizations and that have 150 or fewer employees, such as local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and tourism offices. They are doing a great job representing their members through this crisis.

Fifth, we would allow forgivable loan funds to be spent through December 31 and clarify that borrowers can apply for loan forgiveness at the time of their choosing after 8 weeks from the loan origination.

Sixth, we greatly simplify the loan forgiveness process for smaller borrowers. Those who make a good-faith effort to comply with the program's requirements would be able to use a one-page, simplified loan forgiveness form if they borrowed no more than \$150,000. We also make the loan forgiveness process less complex for borrowers of loans between \$150,000 and \$2 million.

Seventh, we provide the SBA with \$50 million in additional audit funding to ensure that it has the resources necessary to protect the program against fraud. Regrettably, there are always going to be those who attempt to exploit a program, and that is why we want to beef up the audit capacity.

Finally, our amendment includes a series of set-asides to ensure that smaller borrowers and underserved communities get the help they need. These set-asides include money for borrowers with 10 or fewer employees; \$10 billion for community financial institutions, such as small community banks and credit unions; and \$10 million for the Minority Business Development Agency. In addition, the amendment directs the SBA to issue guidance addressing barriers to accessing capital for minority, underserved, veteran, and women-owned businesses.

The Paycheck Protection Program is the result of a bipartisan commitment to support our small businesses, our nonprofits, and their employees during this pandemic. It has been a tremendous success, but many small businesses and nonprofits simply require more help now in order to survive, given the length and persistence of this pandemic.

This amendment provides that help. It is supported by the National Federation of Independent Business, the National Restaurant Association, the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the International Franchise Association, and HospitalityMaine.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letters of support for our amendment at the conclusion of my remarks.

Madam President, I urge our colleagues to support this amendment, to do so now, even if you disagree on other issues that may be taken up. Surely, we can come together and extend this bipartisan, highly successful

program to secure the jobs of small businesses and also to ensure that these small businesses stay afloat. We want to make sure that small businesses, which employed the majority of people in this country, are able to keep their employees employed.

We can continue to work to find common ground—and I am involved in those efforts—on other policies to help support the health and safety of Americans and the safe, responsible opening of our communities. We need more resources for tests and vaccine development; for aid to municipalities and schools; for assistance to our lobstermen, our fishermen, our farmers, our loggers, and to our aviation and motor coach industries. We need more assistance for childcare and for the U.S. Postal Service.

Now is the time to move forward on this bill, on this proposal, to extend and strengthen the PPP before we lose more small businesses, before their employees are forced out of their jobs. So let's act today. It is past time to put aside partisan bickering to provide this much needed relief for the American people.

I urge all of our colleagues to join us in support of this important action to renew and strengthen the PPP program.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION,
October 20, 2020.

Hon. MARCO RUBIO,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS AND SENATOR RUBIO: The National Restaurant Association writes to you in support of the recently-filed amendment, "Continuing the Paycheck Protection Program," scheduled for a vote today.

As you know all too well, the restaurant industry has been uniquely hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our industry has lost more jobs and more revenue than any other. Over the past 7 months, nearly one in six restaurants (representing roughly 100,000 establishments) have closed, and more than 2 million restaurant employees are still without a job today as a result of furloughs and closures. The restaurant industry is on track to lose a staggering \$240 billion in revenue by the end of this year.

Since March, the National Restaurant Association has called for a comprehensive, restaurant-specific response from Congress to assist the nation's second-largest private-sector employer. We continue to call for this, but a comprehensive agreement seems unlikely before the elections, and restaurants are in danger of being left behind.

If Congress cannot approve comprehensive support this year, a second round of funding for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) will at least provide transitional support for restaurants as we approach the winter months. We appreciate your leadership in developing the PPP, in providing more flexibility in its use, and for your calls to ensure that Congress does not leave Washington without providing something for the short-term survival of restaurants.

On behalf of our membership, our state restaurant association partners, and our workforce, we urge the Congress to at a minimum pass a second round of PPP for implementation this year.

Sincerely,

SEAN KENNEDY,

Executive Vice President, Public Affairs.

NFIB,

October 20, 2020.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of NFIB, the nation's leading small business advocacy organization, I write in strong support of the Continuing the Paycheck Protection Program Act offered by Senators Marco Rubio and Susan Collins. This amendment would provide necessary and targeted financial assistance to small businesses for the purposes of keeping workers employed and keeping their doors open during the ongoing public health crisis. A vote to advance the Continuing the Paycheck Protection Program Act amendment will be considered an NFIB Key Vote for the 116th Congress.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has been a vital financial assistance tool to over 5 million small businesses, helping these businesses maintain employees and assisting with expenses such as rent, utilities, and mortgage interest. Unfortunately, the negative economic consequences of COVID-19 on small businesses have lasted longer than Congress anticipated when the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was enacted in late March.

The amendment provides more than \$250 billion in funds to allow for second PPP loans for small businesses if they demonstrate 35% quarterly revenue loss this year. NFIB supports allowing a small business to receive a second PPP loan. The opportunity for second PPP loans would significantly help small businesses who continue to be negatively impacted by economic disruptions of COVID-19.

Additionally, the amendment expands the definition of PPP expenses to include certain operational expenditures, property damage costs, certain supplier costs, and worker protection expenditures, as well as allows small business borrowers to select a flexible covered period to utilize their PPP loan funds. NFIB supports expanding eligible expenses to help small businesses cover essential reopening and operational expenses and providing flexibility regarding timing of PPP expenditures.

The amendment also simplifies the PPP loan forgiveness process, allowing small businesses who received a loan of \$150,000 or less to attest to a good faith effort to comply with PPP loan requirements and obtain forgiveness. NFIB supports providing a more efficient way to demonstrate compliance and receive forgiveness as the vast majority of small business owners have exhausted their PPP funds and are preparing to apply for forgiveness.

Economic conditions are putting significant stress on the financial health of many small business owners struggling to balance lower sales with fixed expenses, and longer-term sustainability. More than one-in-five (21%) small business owners report that they will have to close their doors if current economic conditions do not improve over the next six months. With the realization that lower than average sales are likely for months to come, many small business owners urgently need additional financial assistance. According to NFIB's most recent survey, 49% of small business owners who received PPP loan and/or an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) anticipate needing additional financial support in the next 12 months.

There is bipartisan agreement to provide a targeted second round of PPP loans to small

businesses. NFIB urges Congress to set aside disagreements on other policies and pass legislation to help small business owners immediately.

NFIB strongly supports the Continuing the Paycheck Protection Program Act amendment and a vote to advance the legislation will be considered an NFIB Key Vote for the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

KEVIN KUHLMAN,

Vice President, Federal Government Relations, NFIB.

HOSPITALITY MAINE.

Senator SUSAN COLLINS,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS: I am writing this letter in support of another round of PPP. My understanding is that there are those that feel funding restaurants through the RESTAURANTS Act should be the only hospitality funding provided in a Federal stimulus bill. As an association that represents both small lodging and restaurant businesses in the State of Maine, I can assure you that both have been hit equally as hard. In the State of Maine, one could argue that with the very stringent reopening guidelines and embargoes on certain states to come here, that our small lodging properties may have been hit harder. In a state where the average size lodging business is 14 rooms, we are not talking big business. We are speaking of mom and pop inns and bed and breakfasts that will have a difficult time surviving the winter.

We are not opposed to the RESTAURANTS Act, quite the contrary, we support it wholeheartedly, along with a reasonable form of assistance to the many other business sectors both inside and outside of the hospitality space. In Maine there are windjammers, attractions, museums, music venues and yes small inns and hotels that could also use some help. Let's make sure we don't leave them behind.

Sincerely,

GREG DUGAL,

Director of Government Affairs.

AMERICAN HOTEL & LODGING

ASSOCIATION,

October 20, 2020.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. CHUCK SCHUMER,
Democratic Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADER MCCONNELL AND LEADER SCHUMER: On behalf of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), the sole national association representing all segments of the U.S. lodging industry, including iconic global brands, hotel owners and franchisees, lodging real estate investment trusts (REITs), hotel management companies, independent properties, bed and breakfasts, state hotel associations, and industry suppliers, I write in strong support of the Continuing the Paycheck Protection Program Act (S. 4773) introduced by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Marco Rubio (R-FL). This important legislation would enable hotels and other small businesses access to a second draw of the historic and bipartisan Paycheck Protection Program, giving them a financial lifeline to keep their employees on the payroll and doors open.

The hotel industry continues to be decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the leisure and hospitality space has lost 4.1 million jobs since February and the accommodations sector has an unemployment rate of 34.5% compared to the national average of 8.4%. The human toll on our employees and

our workforce is devastating. The economic impact to our industry is equally as dramatic, estimated to be nine times greater than the September 11th terrorist attacks. According to Oxford Economics, the industry is expected to lose more than fifty percent of its total revenue in 2020.

In a recent survey of hotel employers, AHLA found that 74% of hoteliers reported they would be forced into further layoffs without additional government support, such as a second PPP draw. Nearly half of hotel owners reported that they are in danger of foreclosure due to the pandemic. The hotel industry desperately needs additional relief to survive this crisis.

On behalf of the more than 33,000 small business hotels and the millions of associates they employ, I urge you to support this legislation and to allow the many thousands of hotel owners across the country access to this program. Without immediate relief from Congress, hotel businesses and the jobs they provide will be lost permanently. Thank you for your consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,

BRIAN CRAWFORD,

Executive Vice President, Government Affairs.

Ms. COLLINS. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, first, I would like to commend my colleague, the Senator from Maine, for her absolute, unquestioned leadership in this issue of paycheck protection. She knows, in Maine, as I do in Wyoming, the importance of small businesses to our communities, to our Main Streets, to the vitality of our economies, and she has led the fight from the beginning of coronavirus to make sure our businesses would remain viable; that they would have opportunities to keep people on the payroll; that they can continue to contribute to their communities.

She was the one who brought up this idea in the first place, shepherded it all the way through Congress as part of the CARES Act, and continues in that leadership role today.

I come here today on the floor to first commend my colleague from Maine and also to talk about the ongoing fight against coronavirus and the plan forward, guided by data and doctors, to put the disease behind us and let all of these small businesses that the Senator from Maine has been working to allow to continue to strive and to thrive.

Those in the fight against the virus—and I talk to you as a doctor now—continue to hold our respect and our admiration. They are doing remarkable work in community hospitals and clinics all around the country. And across the country, as a result of the PPP program, our Main Streets are getting a little busier; our economy is gaining strength; kids are going back to school; and even some football is being played.

Most importantly, we are learning more about this disease and how we can successfully treat COVID-19. What doctors and clinicians and researchers and scientists have been able to accomplish in such a relatively short period of time is nothing short of remarkable. These men and women are fighting a battle every day in the labs and the hospitals around the world; they are racing against time; and they are saving lives. They are our heroes today at work all across our Nation.

An effective vaccine will allow everyone to get back to work and to school. It will also be the protection our most vulnerable Americans desperately need: our seniors, patients with pre-existing conditions, anyone confined to a nursing home.

Congress has already directed \$10 billion for vaccine development. I, for one, and other Members of the Republican conference believe that we should be doing more. A month ago, the Senate tried to begin debate on our plan to finish the fight against coronavirus. The bill we brought to the floor of the Senate would get people back to work safely, would get kids back to school safely, and would put the disease behind us. Instead, Democrats, on this very floor—on this very floor—blocked the focused, targeted bill.

Now, this week, Democrats once again are blocking another vote on relief for coronavirus—relief that is needed all around the country; relief that I hear about in Wyoming and, Madam President, you do in West Virginia; relief that our constituents talked to us about as we travel our States.

So why are the Democrats blocking this legislation? Well, it must be something significant to make them block giving aid to the American people when the people need it most urgently. Well, maybe this is why: Maybe the Republican bill doesn't include millions of dollars in tax breaks for rich people in New York and California. The Democratic House-passed bill includes those things. Now, the Republican bill doesn't give taxpayer money to people who are in the country illegally, but the Democratic House-passed bill does do that.

The Republican bill doesn't bail out States that were mismanaged way before anyone had ever heard of the coronavirus. Well, the Democratic House-passed bill does that as well.

The Republican bill doesn't include money for marijuana banking, but the House-passed bill does all of these things.

It is hard to believe these are the reasons the Democrats are preventing coronavirus relief from reaching the President's desk, but just look at the differences in the priorities.

The Democrats are refusing money for Americans until Congress funds their laundry list of unrelated liberal special interest groups. Now, I hope the real reason this coronavirus relief bill is being blocked isn't because of an up-

coming election. I mean, I sincerely hope that Americans aren't being used to score political points or to damage political opponents. Surely, that can't be the reason. It would be unthinkable.

The Speaker and Senator SCHUMER need to set aside all of their political demands and focus on the people in need. They need to set aside the wasteful spending that is unrelated to this battle in order to save lives and set aside their opposition to more money for a lifesaving vaccine. Now is the time to make an agreement that would actually benefit Americans today. There is an urgency. We need to act, and we should act now.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, this virus can do its worst, but we will do our best.

We are doing our best. We are doing our best to get through this together, to get a safe and effective vaccine, and to get our economy and lives back on track. It is time to pass targeted relief. This is the path forward for America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, once again, the Republican leadership is circumventing and abusing the rules of the U.S. Senate. In this Congress, this has happened over and over and over again—denying debate on the Senate floor, where we have the opportunity to offer amendments and have a debate, which the Senate is very famous historically for engaging in. I can give you numerous examples.

There is Justice in Policing. After all of the problems that we have seen around our country, there has been no opportunity on the floor of the Senate to consider legislation, to offer amendments, and have debate.

As for the environmental challenges that our Nation and world face, there has been no debate on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

As for gun safety, we have heard from students and communities of all of the tragedies that have occurred during this Congress, but there has been no debate on the floor of the U.S. Senate, where we would have an opportunity to offer amendments and have a full debate.

As for immigration reform, it is something that has been talked about a great deal, but there has been no real action taken on the floor of the U.S. Senate during this Congress.

With election reform, once again, there has been no debate on the floor of the U.S. Senate and no opportunity to offer amendments.

We are not doing what the American people expect us to do, and I can name

many, many, many more examples. At last count, somewhere around 400 bills have come over to us from the House of Representatives—many bipartisan—that have not been considered by the U.S. Senate.

Then, of course, the Republican leadership changes the rules when it suits itself in order to do what it wants to do, particularly with judicial confirmations. We are seeing that right now in the attempt to fill Justice Ginsburg's vacancy. They are changing the rules. The rules that apply to the Democrats don't apply to the Republicans. They do whatever they want to do. That is not what we should be doing. Now we see the Republican leadership circumventing and abusing the rules of the U.S. Senate as it relates to our responsibility with COVID-19.

Everyone knows, including the Republican leader, that we are not going to enact the bill that is currently before the Senate without the amendments being offered by the majority leader. Why are we taking up these issues? There is one simple answer: political cover votes. That is the only reason for it, but there is a consequence to this. It makes it more difficult for us to get relief to those who need it. Whether it be small businesses or whether it be our schools or whether it be our State and local governments or whether it be those who are unemployed or whether it be American families, it makes it more difficult because, as we are taking up these issues, Secretary Mnuchin, on behalf of the Trump administration, and Speaker PELOSI are negotiating, from which we hope there will be a comprehensive package to deal with COVID-19.

I must tell you that Secretary Mnuchin has a very difficult challenge. First, he has to represent the President of the United States, who changes his mind every few minutes on whether he wants a package or doesn't want a package, which makes it very difficult for Secretary Mnuchin to negotiate with Speaker PELOSI. Then he has to deal with the Republicans in the U.S. Senate. We will be voting tomorrow, I understand, on a proposal from the Republicans that will be less than one-third of the amount of money that President Trump has authorized in negotiations, pulling us further apart and making it more difficult for us to reach an agreement to help the people of this country.

Since mid-May and again several months ago, the House did its work. It sent over to us a comprehensive bill to deal with the next phase of COVID-19. There have been no efforts—none whatsoever—by the Republican leader to bring that legislation to the floor of the U.S. Senate so that we can have an open and full debate with amendments as to what to do. That bill has been here since mid-May, and we can't find the time to have that type of debate. So what is Leader MCCONNELL suggesting? You will have to follow this

because I know, if it were not so serious, the public would find it somewhat amusing.

First, he wants to withdraw the amendment that was championed by the Republicans that deals with pre-existing conditions. I must tell you that we all on our side of the aisle said that this was just another political cover vote. Now Leader MCCONNELL is making that prediction very clear by withdrawing it and offering it again later as an effort to block the Democrats from being able to offer a clean vote on an amendment. We are going to make it a clean vote anyway, but that is his motivation. He is withdrawing the amendment that deals with pre-existing conditions so that it will no longer be a part of the bill.

Then he is going to offer an amendment to the underlying message, S. 178, which is legislation that deals with sanctions against China. You heard me right. This is a message on legislation that deals with sanctions against China. It already includes the underlying amendment that Leader MCCONNELL is offering—the amendment that we are voting on in a few minutes. Then he is going to file a motion to table, which means he will want to kill the amendment. Then he is going to vote against his own motion. I hope you all can follow that.

Here is the irony or hypocrisy of all of this: If the motion to table carries, the provisions that are in the amendment are still in the underlying bill. In other words, it has no effect whatsoever because it is already in the bill. So this is a vote for one purpose only—to give political cover. The American people understand that, and they understand that this is strictly about dealing with a partisan, political type of trickery, and we should have no part of that.

Let's talk about the process that we have used. There will be no chance in this legislation of helping businesses with the passage of a comprehensive bill under the approach taken by the Republican leader. Now, there is a model we could follow. It has worked before, and it can work again. Look at the CARES Act. We had partisan differences, and we bridged those partisan differences. We worked together and put the American people's interests first. As a result, we passed the CARES Act with a proud 97-to-0 vote in the U.S. Senate and provided desperately needed help in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic itself, in dealing with the health professionals and the public health people, and for testing and for vaccine development. We provided money for State and local governments, and we provided money for businesses and taxpayers. We also dealt with unemployment insurance. We did all of that.

When we passed that bill in March, we thought this pandemic would be behind us by now and that we wouldn't still be in the first wave and be increasing the numbers of people infected with

COVID-19. We need more help, not less help, so we need a second round.

I am frustrated in regard to the provisions affecting small business. I say that because Senator RUBIO, the Republican chair of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and I, as ranking Democrat of that committee, were proud to work together and put the interest of our country first and develop the tools that were included in the CARES Act, which included, yes, the Paycheck Protection Program, the PPP. It also included EIDL loans and grants.

It also included loan forgiveness in an effort to help small businesses. It was truly a bipartisan working effort. We were, I think, the first of the different provisions that were included in the CARES Act that were basically worked out in a bipartisan manner. But that is not the process the majority leader is following today. The proposal he is making is not a bipartisan proposal that has been worked on by Senator RUBIO and me. We haven't come together. We could easily resolve our differences; I have no doubt about it. If we get the parameters on how much money we have, and give us a few minutes to negotiate, we will come to an agreement, as we have done in the past. I have every confidence in the world that we will do it. But this process doesn't further that aim—a process that cannot lead to help for our small businesses.

Let's talk about what our small businesses need.

First, they need comprehensive help. Similar to what we did in the CARES Act, they need a second major influx of help. They need help for State and local government. Why? Because the stability of the services provided by State and local government is critically important for the climate in which small businesses need to operate to get back to some degree of normalcy.

They need help for our schools because our schools need to reopen as fully as they can safely, whether it is virtual or in classroom or hybrid, and they don't have the resources to do it. Our economy will not get back on track unless parents are confident about the educational opportunities of their children and can fully participate in our economy knowing their children are safe. Small businesses need that type of support.

They need help for the people who are unemployed. That \$600 a week went directly to helping small businesses by providing customers that use small businesses.

We have 12 million Americans who are uninsured today. We didn't anticipate that in March when we passed the CARES Act, that we would still have those numbers.

We need a comprehensive approach, and, yes, we need to get COVID-19 under control. We need confidence among Americans that it is OK to go out and shop and use services and par-

ticipate fully in our economy. But until they are confident they can do that safely, the economy will not rebound the way it needs to. So small businesses need a comprehensive approach.

Food services are still doing very poorly, and now we are entering into the cold months, when it is more difficult to eat outdoors. It means restaurants are going to need more help, not less.

The hospitality industry is still very much impacted by COVID-19. We know that there are no large gatherings or events. The travel and tourism industry has taken a hit. I saw that during COVID-19, during the summer months, down on the beaches when the normal crowds were not there. We will see it again this winter in the western part of our State, as we see fewer people are traveling to Deep Creek Lake.

We all recognize that we need to give attention to these types of conditions to get consumers back, that this economy is OK, to help small business.

Now, the House has acted not once but twice, and Senator MCCONNELL instead brings up a bill one-third the offer the President—less than one-third of the offer the President has already put on the table and probably about a quarter—less than a quarter of what the Democrats have passed in their most recent bill.

So Senator MCCONNELL is going to first file an amendment that would provide a second round of the Paycheck Protection Program. I agree we should have a second round of the Paycheck Protection Program. We need a second round—that is nothing new. We have had hearings in our committee where Secretary Mnuchin acknowledged that, the Democrats acknowledged it, and the Republicans acknowledged it.

I filed legislation in June with Senator SHAHEEN on a second round of PPP—in June. It is now October, and we haven't brought that bill to the floor so we could reconcile differences if we were going to bring it up on its own, if it is not going to be part of a comprehensive package. But what Leader MCCONNELL is saying is we are going to bring it up on our own, but it doesn't take into consideration the lessons we learned from the Paycheck Protection Program, the first round.

What did we learn? We learned that underbanked, underserved communities were not treated fairly; that they didn't have the relationship with the banks that allow them to get the money in a timely way, get as large of a loan as the more established small businesses were able to get; that the lenders were more likely to do business with those who had existing relations, with the larger loans; and that we needed to empower the mission lenders who go into underserved communities and we needed to concentrate on the smaller and the smallest of the small businesses. If you look at what is being brought forward today, the legislation does not adequately provide for the underserved community.

We also learned from the first round of help in the CARES Act about the importance of the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program, the EIDL Program. Now, you see, the EIDL Program provides loans, and those loans are critically important because that is working capital. That is not just payroll; it is working capital. Small businesses need long-term, low-interest EIDL loans that are able to be paid over a long period of time and to get a break in the first year or two where they don't even have to make payments.

They needed the EIDL loans, but we also created an EIDL grant program. Now, I must tell you something. Many small businesses—particularly the smaller of the small businesses—are reluctant to take out any more loans. They don't know how they are going to pay them off. They need grants. They need grants. We provided originally \$10 billion and then another \$10 billion. We provided \$20 billion, but that is gone. We need to replenish that money for the grant program. The amendment the leader is bringing up doesn't provide any help for that grant program.

In addition, we need to think more strategically about grants under the EIDL Program, and there is a way of doing that. I will come back to that in a minute. It is not in the leader's amendment.

We need to do something about the arbitrary cap that the administration placed on the EIDL loans. They placed a \$150,000 cap. The law says \$2 million. They compromised the effectiveness of this.

Now, here is the good news. We have bipartisan support for these changes. Senator ROSEN and Senator CORNYN have filed legislation that would allow us to move forward with the EIDL Program, but it is not in the amendment being offered by the majority leader.

There are so many other programs in the small business field that are important. There is the loan forgiveness program—Senator COONS worked on that—that forgives loans for 6 months under the 504 and the 7(a) programs. We can reduce the cost of small business loans. We can approve microloans. I could mention so many other areas where we could provide help.

We know we have specific industries that need special attention, such as the restaurant industry, such as local newspapers, such as nonprofits that weren't covered under the first PPP program. Those are not covered under Leader MCCONNELL's amendment.

Here is the tragedy: There is no opportunity under this process for us to correct errors in Senator MCCONNELL's amendment. No chance to amend. Never had a chance to amend. Never went through the committee. And, by the way, is on a bill unrelated to this relief and has no chance of passage.

That is not what we should be doing. We have other options. We could bring the revised House Heroes bill to the floor of the U.S. Senate. It is a com-

prehensive approach. It has been compromised. We could open it to amendment. We could debate it and pass it and provide comprehensive relief. It includes all of the small business provisions that I mentioned earlier. They are included in the House-passed bill. They passed a couple weeks ago.

If Leader MCCONNELL is just determined to bring a small business bill to the floor, then I have filed such legislation today with many of my colleagues—a bill that works with issues of concern to small businesses, which is very much bipartisan. It includes not only the second round of PPP but also includes important help for the underbanked communities and mission lenders. It provides real help for the smaller of the small businesses. It increases the EIDL Program—similar to the Rosen-Cornyn bill but also adds a new opportunity for grants under the EIDL Program. It strengthens programs in areas for the hospitality industry, for our local newspapers, for our nonprofits. It provides help in many of the small business existing programs, such as the loan forgiveness program. The cost of small business loans are reduced. Microloans are improved.

We could bring up that legislation, and then we have a bill that really deals with small business that can be debated, amended. We can have amendments and vote on it. But at least we have a comprehensive bill that has a chance of being enacted. Why do I say it has a chance of being enacted? Because the House has already acted on this. It is included in their package. We don't have to try to conference this.

Look, we should have passed this months ago, but we all know elections are coming up in 2 weeks. We have to act if we are going to act. Here is a bill we can act on now and get done because we know the House has already voted on a similar package.

We know small businesses need help. They are in desperate need of help. Our economy needs help. Americans need the Senate to stop playing procedural political games and to be serious about taking up legislation that can deal with their needs.

I am ready at any time to sit down with my Republican colleagues and work out such legislation, but the way the majority leader is going about this is just wrong, and it should not be supported by any of us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I don't know of any topic that is more supported around here than the helping of small businesses. I think the biggest evidence of that is that I would venture to guess almost every Member of this body has at some point gone back home and bragged about what we were able to achieve together in a bipartisan way.

And to remind everybody, this program has never existed before. It was put together in a bipartisan way with

the ranking member, the Senator from Maryland you just heard from. We worked on it—I think it was 6 or 7 days. And it wasn't a perfect program. Like anything new, this big, that fast, it had some hiccups, and we worked in a bipartisan way with the administration to implement it.

I will say this without any reservation: It was by far the single most effective piece of that CARES package, and there isn't a day that goes by when I am back in Florida or, frankly, anywhere in the country that I don't hear about it. I don't know anyone who hasn't. One of the most common themes when we go places is a small business owner who says PPP was a lifesaver, and then they ask: Is there more on the way, because we are still struggling?

That it is a lifesaver is without question. I mean, I look at Florida. Over 430,000 of these PPP loans—which, really, in most cases are going to end up being grants—were made. That is \$32 billion of relief into our economy. The ranking member's home State—87,000. I looked at some other States just quickly on the way over here. Iowa, 61,000. In North Carolina, 129,000 of these were made. Michigan, 128,000. Arizona, 85,000. In Colorado, 109,000 of these were made. Montana, 23,000. The State of Maine, where Senator COLLINS was a key part of all this, 28,000. Georgia, neighboring Florida, 174,000. I could go on and on.

Another thing we should be really proud about as far as PPP is that two-thirds of the loans—the grants—were under \$50,000, which tells you about the size of these businesses. In fact, 70 percent—70 percent—of these were made to businesses that had 10 employees or fewer. By far, it was the most effective thing we did.

You can look at the jobs figures. I have this chart up here just to show it. PPP and small business employment—you look at the precipitous dropoff in March, and then once PPP began to get disbursed, you see those numbers, and as the disbursement goes up, the chart goes up.

Now, are they perfect? No. Will we want it back up here? Of course. Are there businesses that didn't make it? Sadly, yes. But there are people working right now. There are small businesses that were going to be wiped off the face of this country's economy that are open to this day because of what we were able to do. But it expired, meaning that you could only get it once. There was a date where it cut off. The ranking member wisely moved and we all agreed and we were able to extend it by another month to help people apply, but now you can't go back.

So what do you do? You are a business or restaurant, for example, and you used PPP once and have expended that money over 24 weeks, and now you are in the same boat or potentially in the same place you were back in March and April. The money is gone, the customers aren't back yet, and you are

about to close and people are about to get laid off. So we need to do a second round.

There are a lot of other things we can do for small business—I agree with that wholeheartedly—but this is one that I think we have to do because there is tremendous agreement. The reason it is not happening is because, No. 1, some people think of it as leverage. Everyone likes PPP, so let's hold out on it. Let's not do it until it is part of a broader package of things unrelated to small business because it is so popular. It is the carrot that will bring everybody toward supporting the broader deal.

That may have made sense back in May or June, but not now, not in October, not since we have long since expended the moneys that these companies received, and now they are facing the same situation they were back in March and early April. Now we have to do what we can.

I don't think we can fall—unfortunately, we have, but it is not very smart to fall into this habit of saying that if we can't do everything, we shouldn't do anything. That is just across the board. There are a lot of other areas that we need to provide COVID relief in—I agree with that—but we are not going to do it in 6 days. We should have done it a long time ago. It didn't come to that. But this is one piece I think we can all agree on. Even if they are small businesses—and I only caught the tail end of what he was saying. The ranking member points to a lot of other things we could do to help small business. I agree with that. There are things beyond PPP that would help them. The fundamental challenge we have here is that we have a limited amount of time to get this thing done, and I appreciate the idea that the House already passed it. But the thing is, that is not something that is going to become law. That is the reality. Just like there are things we want on this side that are not going to become law, because to pass a law right now in Washington requires passage in a Senate with a Republican majority, but there are not 60 Republicans, so we need Democratic votes. We need this body to pass it, and we need a Democratically controlled House to pass it and a Republican President to sign it. That is just basic math in terms of what it takes. That is just the basic outline of what it takes to turn whatever it is we are talking about here into a law to actually help people.

If you want to help people, we have to figure out something that at least 60 people in the Senate and a majority in the House will agree on and that the President will sign. The one thing I know for sure that could get that, if we just had a straight up-or-down vote on it, is the notion of extending a second round of PPP assistance to a targeted number of small businesses. That is it.

Now, is that everything I want to do? No. I want us to do more. By the way, if we can figure something more to do

in the meantime, that would be great, but this must happen. There is no way of explaining to people: Hold on a second. Everybody agrees that we need to do more just to extend PPP.

Well, why haven't you done it?

Then you have to explain: Well, because there were nine other things we wanted to do for small business, but because we couldn't agree on those, we didn't do the one we agreed on; or, there was a bunch of things non-small-business related that we wanted to get done, and because those didn't happen, we are holding up the whole thing.

People don't understand it. That doesn't make sense in the real world to anybody.

The bottom line is this: We have a basic formula here that, if we put aside those considerations, could get support and could pass pretty quickly. The other issues are still going to be there, and we should do them, too, but we shouldn't hold this up in order to do that.

That is what we are going to have a chance to do here in a few minutes. If we don't, if we don't, then we will have to explain—all of us—to people why it is that this is being held up. If you tell them it is because people want leverage for more stuff, they are not going to understand that. It is very simple.

For anyone watching now or for anyone who watches this later, it is a simple concept. We have before us right now the ability to help—to the tune of close to \$250 billion—millions of small business workers across this country and their employers, to keep them on payroll, to stay open for a few more months while we get through this pandemic. We have a chance to do it through a model that we know works, a model that was recently used. We just re-up that for a second round to a targeted number of small businesses, under a certain number of employees, facing certain revenue constraints. We even open it up to some additional not-for-profits. We have a chance to do that. We have all these other things that we should do as well, and we should do those, too, but we shouldn't wait for those things to do this thing, to help right now.

This is not theoretical. Right now, at this very moment, there are thousands upon thousands of small businesses that are holding on, on a week-by-week basis. Whether or not they can survive isn't up to them. It is up to whether the local government allows them to open and at what capacity. It is up to whether their customers have the financial wherewithal to go back and visit or spend.

The businesses we are talking about are restaurants, absolutely; live venues, absolutely; and all those other places that have been hurt in hospitality, without a doubt. But other businesses are being hurt too. I know a dry-cleaner in South Florida who is being hurt. You might ask, why? They are allowed to open. Well, because when people stopped working and going to cer-

tain places, they spent less money on drycleaning. Now a place that had eight employees now has six, and of the six, four are only part time. They will have an opportunity, if they get PPP, to keep that workforce employed full time, and it would matter to those families.

We can do this. Doing this doesn't mean we don't do anything else. Those other issues still have to be addressed. But let's at least do this. It isn't everything, but it is a lot, and it is something, and it will matter, and there is no reason not to do it. It will in no way keep us from doing the other things that need to be done.

Again, just because we are not going to do everything in one shot should not mean that we don't do something. We have a chance to do something, and it is meaningful, and it is a model that we know works, and it is a model we have all supported in the past, and it is one that I hope that in the next few minutes some people will change their minds on and support now because to not do something is inexplicable. It would make no sense.

There are real people in the real world who are just trying to hold on and can't figure out why it is we are here and we can't do something to help them at their hour of greatest need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise today to speak on behalf of people and small businesses in Michigan that are being left behind on this Republican bill. As my friend from Florida has said, we can do something. The Senate Democratic leader is going to be offering us an opportunity to vote on something comprehensive that has been passed by the House that doesn't leave small businesses, families, healthcare providers, and the need for testing and tracing behind.

When I think about who is being left behind in this bill, I think of the single mom of two boys who is seeing her hours cut, and her paycheck has shrunk, and she is left behind by what we are being asked to vote on right now. There is no need for that. She doesn't know how she is going to keep the lights on. The weather is getting cold.

The 83-year-old retiree who is struggling to afford food and who goes to bed hungry night after night is being left behind on what we are being asked to vote on. That doesn't have to happen. We have an alternative that has passed the House that we can vote on and get this done today.

The owner of a small restaurant is being left behind. He has been able to stay open by offering takeout, but he is just barely—just barely—holding on, wanting specific help that is available through legislation introduced in the Senate, that is bipartisan, that is not in this bill. He is being left behind.

We are talking about the families who thought 2020 would be the year

they would finally get ahead, and then COVID hit, and now they are at risk of being evicted and losing their homes that brought their children stability for the first time.

There are the Michigan families who have lost loved ones—more than 7,000 grandmas and grandpas and moms and dads, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, cousins, neighbors, and friends.

People in Michigan aren't talking about a stimulus bill; they want a survival package because it is survival for them right now. Instead, Republicans have introduced a bill that leaves our urgent health care needs, our families, and far too many businesses behind.

This Republican proposal leaves behind the most important thing we need to do right now to get the pandemic under control. President Trump has said that we will wake up one day and COVID-19 will have miraculously gone away. Oh, wouldn't that be great. But we are tired of waiting and getting up every day and being faced with the threat of COVID-19.

If we want people to send their kids to school, reopen their businesses, get back to work, be able to go shopping at their small businesses, to be able to eat at their restaurants, then we need to make sure things are safe. Right now, it is not safe.

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations and deaths are spiking all across the country. The White House is still resisting a national testing strategy, as if it is some kind of giveaway to Democrats instead of public health 101.

Meanwhile, millions of people have lost their jobs, which means they have also lost their health insurance, which he doesn't want to address, and our healthcare system is under strain. Our hospitals and our nursing homes are still struggling to get enough personal protective equipment for their employees, for families who want to visit, and for patients. Our healthcare professionals are exhausted, stressed, and at severe risk of burnout. Healthcare needs are left behind in this bill, and so are the needs of our families.

Right now, the unemployment rate in Michigan is 8.5 percent—higher than the national average. Since March 15, 2.3 million Michigan residents have relied on unemployment. The extra \$600 a week provided in the CARES Act was a lifeline for these Michigan families, and it needs to be extended so they can have a roof over their heads and pay their bills and survive. A survey last month by the U.S. Census Bureau found that 25 percent of Michigan residents thought they would be evicted or lose their home to foreclosure in the next 2 months.

We need to act now—now. We have an opportunity. The Senate Democratic leader will give us the opportunity to vote on that bill and act now. Without additional unemployment aid and rental assistance, where will these families go in January when the CDC eviction moratorium expires and they are months behind in rent?

This legislation also leaves our children behind. The Republican bills have not provided adequate funding to reopen our schools safely, and millions of parents, including my own daughter and her family and my own son and his family, are juggling, trying to make sure that kids can work online, trying to make sure they are getting the education they need. It is hard.

The money that has been provided in the bill, unfortunately, in the underlying bill—there is some, but it comes with strings attached. Schools must physically reopen in order to receive their fair share of funding. So if your school district has decided that COVID cases have gone up and it is not safe for the children to go back to school—they are still paying the teachers, they are operating remotely, and they have all the costs of operating remotely, but if they are not physically there, as President Trump insists on, physically there regardless of the health risk, they would not get the help they need for our children to be educated—quite a change for a political party that likes to talk about local control.

But there is one exception. If your child is going to a private school, you get a great big tax credit if you send your child to a private school rather than a public school, like the vast majority of children in our country.

Brecken is a 5-year-old kindergarten student in the De Tour area public schools in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She has access to high-speed internet in only one way, and that is if her parents disconnect every other electronic device in their house while she is doing her studies. And the connection isn't great. Brecken and other students in rural areas deserve the same internet connectivity that their city friends enjoy, but the Republicans leave them behind.

Democrats have proposed a \$4 billion E-rate funding increase to ensure children are able to go to school remotely. We don't want Brecken or any child left behind in this COVID-19 crisis.

We can't talk about schools without talking about healthy food and nutrition. They go hand in hand. The average person getting help right now—food assistance—receives \$127 a month, which is \$1.40 per meal. About 40 percent of our families who are getting even that have gotten absolutely no increased help whatsoever. And we know in the food lines, people who have donated to the food banks all their lives are now sitting in their car for hours sometimes, waiting to go through the food line themselves. Our families need help. Our families are hungry. We can fix that if we pass the bill that the House sent to us.

Finally, this legislation isn't just about leaving critical healthcare needs and testing needs behind, leaving our children and leaving our families behind. It leaves far too many businesses behind. Over the past few months, I have met with so many Michigan business owners, mostly over Zoom—res-

taurants, gyms, entertainment venues, craft jewelry, theaters that have been revitalizing Michigan downtowns. One of the things I love is that not just in big cities but in small towns across Michigan, you will go downtown, and there is now a craft brewery, and then they have rebuilt and revitalized a historic theater, and they are rebuilding the downtown. They have been hit so hard by what has happened with COVID-19. They deserve specific help that they are not getting in this legislation.

All small businesses are not getting the help—the kind of help—that they need. We don't want to leave any small business behind, including our minority-owned small businesses in underserved communities and nonprofits. We fought successfully, as Democrats, to add \$30 billion in dedicated funding for those who are underbanked or receiving their financial support in other nontraditional ways. That is not in here either.

So we need an approach for this pandemic and the economic catastrophe it has unleashed across the country. We need an approach that is serious and is bold—neither of which is what we are about to vote on with this PPP vote—for testing and healthcare, for keeping our children safe so they can get back to school, for our families and all of our businesses.

We know that so many have been hit in ways that are different than others, so we need to address all of our small businesses. This is no time to leave any of them behind, and the Republican initiative in front of us does just that. People deserve better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I do want to say that we are here at a time when the Republican Party is jamming yet another nominee through bizarre procedural practices onto the Supreme Court.

We have examined in the Judiciary Committee some of the ways in which the funding for that operation flows from big anonymous donors who use the Federalist Society as a conduit to buy a seat at the table where our Supreme Court Justices are selected, and then, with contributions as big as \$17 million, pays for campaign ads for the nominee who has been selected and then sends an entire flotilla of front groups in an orchestrated chorus to go and argue together before the Supreme Court as if they were different.

What I want to say today is that we have been looking at this captured court problem for a while, and we are releasing this "What's at Stake" report on what it means for climate and the environment because who is behind the scheme to capture the court are primarily the big polluters who want protection from courts that will be friendly to their interests.

I will speak more about this and about why they are willing to spend